23: Franck--300-301 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 793, 779, 883

"Some of the old priests of Luang Prabang are honored as demigods by the people of the kingdom. They step forth from their holy dwellings only with a ceremonial parasol held over them, by one of the surrounding group of youngster attendants in the same bright yellow; and the French commissaire himself was almost servile in the respectful politeness with which he treated the most holy of them all, whose attitude sometimes suggested that it was he who had the upper hand. These bonzes may not even kill a flea, though the provocation must often be almost too strong to be borne; but they may eat beef and the flesh of other animals killed by some one else. Even the cynical French residents say they are real celibates, that they would be expelled from the order if they were caught breaking this particular vow. It might be harder to keep were not all young men expected to be priests for a year or two, as those of European lands become soldiers, only the ones to whom the monastic life appeals retaining the yellow robe, which the great majority soon discard for marriage. Little less sacred than the priests are the dogs that all but overrun the capital, eating the food laid out for gods and bonzes, much as the sacred oxen of India take their toll from pious shopkeepers. Held in a kind of Buddhist reverence by the people and more or less [301] protected by the priests, these mongrels are not even subjected to muzzle or license, though the French would like to improve their rules of sanitation to the extent of exterminating the harmless but self-confident curs."

25: Brodrick--106 [3] S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 562, 586, 883

"Laotian women seem never to have been parked and compressed into any sort of seclusion. Divorce is easy and a manner of seeking it was most charmingly civilized. If a husband had reason to think that his wife did not like him, he placed flowers upon her pillow. If she could still tolerate him, or if she had not any new plans, then she left the flowers untouched for three days. If she desired to get rid of her man, she threw the flowers away, whereupon he walked out and got a divorce.

And at the Love Courts, the phousao and the phoubao, the girls and the boys are free and equal, at least as far as the conventions rule."

Kha

caught even on the other side of the watershed and then delivered as slaves to the Burmese, Siamese, Cambodian and Laotian merchants of the low country. The barbarity of their mores has been greatly lessened since our arrival in Laos, but traces of it still exist and manifest themselves in rivalries and attacks between tribes. The police force which [260] we have organized in the land in the form of a native militia, the influence of the missionaries who have settled among the turbulent Khas, and also the help and example of the tribes which have submitted to our tutelary authority will soon cause this abnormal state of things to disappear. Finally, our increasingly effective occupation of the land, which has been completed by the organization of the province of Darlac, and the strict protectorate which we exercise over Cambodia, the chief purchaser of slaves, have begun to bring order in an effective fashion to this shameful traffic in human flesh (1).

(1) See § I of Chapter XI.

It should be noted that the Djarais and the Rades are the only Khas who speak Cham, that is to say a greatly corrupted Malay tongue which they have preserved for centuries.

The men's clothing consists of a loin-cloth, and that of the women consists only of a short skirt knotted around the waist or under the armpits, the torso left bare.

Both men and women have long hair wound in a coil. Both sexes, but mainly the men, wear jewels of a crude shape, made of tin or brass, in the form of bracelets, neckbands, ear pendants or cylinders and hairpins. They are also very fond of glass bead necklaces.

These Khas smoke tobacco, either dried or green, as well as bamboo shavings impregnated with nicotine. They make terra cotta pipes with highly worked bowls and also use imported brass pipes. They do not blacken their teeth.

From the point of view of diet and housing, practically the same conditions obtain as we have seen above except that the houses are built with greater care and arranged in the form of a circular camp.

In the middle of Cedang and Rognao villages there is a large house some twenty to thirty meters long by twelve to fifteen meters wide, with a high pointed roof. This is the common house where all the boys of the locality live from the age of nine or ten until the day of their marriage.

538 inscriptions, some of which go back to the fourteenth century and are [172] in the Laotian language. For the earlier period we have seen above that these inscriptions were either in Sanskrit or in Khmer (Cf. Stele of Sayfong, appendix: Vientiane).

Music

533 Laotian songs belong to the field of poetry and are of two kinds:
538 the one consists of poems celebrating the exploits of legendary heroes,
883 transmitted from father to child, from master to pupil, and often expanded by imaginary improvisations; the others embroider the love theme.

[86] Alternate chants are used, particularly in the courts of love. A young girl sings, a boy answers. These songs have become a traditional game whose social function has been forgotten. They consist of a series of questions and answers. Often the questions are even real puzzles or simple guessing questions. By asking each other questions, the young people try to get to know each other.

It seems as if the origin could be found here of what the Indians call the svayamvara which is the choice of the husband by the woman. This custom is very persistent among the white Thai of the Phongtho region.

534 While vocal music is very prevalent in Laos, there exists also instrumental music which should not be neglected. We summarize here the excellent account given by his Highness Tiao Souvanna Phouma on Laotian music.

"There are three kinds of instruments: a) wind (the khouy and the khene), b) string (the So I and the So O), c) percussion (the Nang Nat and the Khong Vong).

The khene consists of a series of thin bamboos of various and decreasing lengths placed side by side in pairs like the flutes of Pan. Usually these are in seven consecutive rows. These bamboos are joined together by two half gourds attached with wax which form the blowing chamber and have a small circular opening to serve as mouthpiece. On the inside, the bamboos are pierced with holes. The most curious thing about the way the khene functions is that several notes are simultaneous and are absolutely continuous.

The khouy is a flute without any keys, generally made of bamboo and giving very clear tones.

The so, violins with two strings, consist of a long carved wooden handle and a sounding box. [87] The latter is a half coconut closed by